



# THE MUSICKER'S GAZETTE



No. 16

WALKING BOXES PRODUCTIONS

## WHAT YEAR IS IT?

The year in which our drama takes place is purposely left vague, but certainly it is sometime in the late 1890s. Clues come through the Bodens' expressed enthusiasm for some of the latest musical developments taking place during that decade: works by Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Satie, Humperdinck, and Joplin. Though the Bodens make no mention of it, they would perhaps have recently seen their first automobile and/or motion picture. Their president would have been Cleveland or McKinley. Economic depression, spurned by the Panic of 1893, would likely have been a topic of general conversation, as perhaps would have been the Spanish-American War. The Victorian era was coming to a close, and the Bodens were trying to enjoy the last years of the "Gay Nineties".

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## UPCOMING SHOWS

J Roth, is teaming up with *Harmony Theatre* to produce a show this December 13<sup>th</sup> at the JCC Sabes Theater.

The show is called: *The Road of Life*, and it recounts the heroic struggles of the children of Leningrad attempting to survive the 900 day siege laid upon their city by the Nazis.

The ensemble of *Harmony Theatre* is comprised largely of children including the charming Miss Ella Dolynchuk. Also featured in the cast are Minnesota Historical Society favorites: Jeff & Christine Nordin, James Eckert, and Alex Weston. Please visit [www.centerharmony.org](http://www.centerharmony.org) to reserve tickets and find out more.

## THANKS

Walking Boxes wishes to thank Steve & Sharon Roth, Cindy Olsen, Carol Seim, the Ramsey House Staff, the Ramsey House Board of Governors, the Dolynchuks, and all our fine supporting businesses (please support them with your patronage). Thanks also to all of you who have come out to support Walking Boxes and its collaborating artists over the past year.

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## SHOW NOTES

### Cast (in order of appearance):

Carol Seim.....as Jenny  
Elizabeth Karre.....as Mrs. Boden  
J Roth.....as Mr. Boden  
Wesley Stone.....as Lars  
Ella Dolynchuk .....as Violet  
Paulette Day.....as Auntie

\*Story by J Roth & Elizabeth Karre

### HISTORY OF THE MUSIC AND READINGS

The **Bach Prelude** is from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* and is dated to 1722. This prelude, along with Bach's other compositions in the *Clavier* collection, are regarded as some of the most influential works in the history of Western classical music.

Three Gilbert & Sullivan operas are heard from in our show: first (briefly) **"I'm Called Little Buttercup"** from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, which opened in London in May 1878 and ran for 571 performances, the second-longest run of any musical theatre piece up to that time. *H.M.S. Pinafore* was the fourth opera of Gilbert and Sullivan and their first international sensation.

Next comes **"With Catlike Tread"** from *Pirates of Penzance*. The opera's official premiere was in New York City in December 1879. This was Gilbert and Sullivan's fifth opera together.

Last, but not least, is heard: **"Now to the Banquet We Press"** from *The Sorcerer* (their third opera together). *The Sorcerer* opened in November 1877 in the Strand in London, where it ran for 178 performances.

The **Coventry Carol** dates from the 16th Century. The carol was performed in Coventry, England as part of a mystery play called *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*. The play depicts the Christmas story from chapter two in the Gospel of Matthew. The carol refers to the Massacre of the Innocents, in which Herod orders all male infants under the age of two in Bethlehem to be killed. It is the only carol that has survived from this play. The author is unknown. The oldest known text was written down in 1534.

Over *Coventry* is read **"Ring Out, Wild Bells"**, a poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Published in 1850, it forms part of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson's elegy to Arthur Henry Hallam, his sister's fiancé who died at the age of twenty-two.

**"Dance of the Candy Fairy"** is from *The Nutcracker* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, composed in 1891-92. Alexandre Dumas Père's adaptation of the story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" by E. T. A. Hoffmann was set to music by Tchaikovsky.

The suite was first performed, under the composer's direction, on March 19, 1892 at an assembly in St. Petersburg. The suite became instantly popular, but the complete ballet did not begin to achieve its great popularity until around the mid-1950s.

A **Christmas Carol** (originally: *A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*) was written by Charles Dickens. The book was first published in 1843 and quickly met with success and acclaim. Our reading from the book is fittingly paired with **"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"**; here mentioned in *A Christmas Carol*: "...at



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the first sound of — 'God bless you merry, gentlemen, may nothing you dismay' — Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror...."

This carol is said to be one of the most popular of the early carols, sung for centuries before being published in Britain in 1833. The composer is unknown.

**Scotland the Brave**, danced to by Mrs. Boden, is considered by many to be the unofficial anthem of Scotland. The composer is unknown; the tune is believed to have originated around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Gnossienne #1** by Erik Satie is briefly introduced by Mr. Boden. Satie coined the word "gnossienne". This piece along with two other Gnossiennes were composed around 1890. The song was, most interestingly, written without time signature or bar lines.

**In the Bleak Midwinter** was written as a poem by Christina Rossetti before 1872, it was published posthumously in Rossetti's Poetic Works in 1904 and became a Christmas carol after it appeared in *The English Hymnal* in 1906. The poem is paired with **O Come, O Come Emmanuel** for our production. This carol is believed to stem from a 15th Century French processional for Franciscan nuns, but it may also have 8th Century Gregorian origins.

**Solace** (a.k.a. *A Mexican Serenade*) was written by Scott Joplin. This piece is our one foray into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as it wasn't published (and likely not written) until 1909. Joplin was active in the 1890s though; in 1899, he sold the "Maple Leaf Rag" to a music publisher. It was an immediate success and was ragtime's first hit. It was also the first

instrumental to sell over a million copies of sheet music.

**Christmas Everyday** was written by American author William Dean Howells (1837 – 1920) and first published in 1892.

**Is There a Santa Claus?** was the title of an editorial appearing in the September 21, 1897 edition of the *New York Sun*.

In that year, Dr. Philip O'Hanlon, a coroner's assistant in Manhattan, was asked by his then eight-year-old daughter, Virginia, whether Santa Claus really existed. Dr. O'Hanlon suggested she write to the *New York Sun*, assuring her that "If you see it in The Sun, it's so." One of the paper's editors, Francis Pharcellus Church, who had been a war correspondent during the American Civil War, wrote the editorial. More than a century later it remains the most reprinted editorial ever to run in any newspaper in the English language.

This editorial is paired with **O Holy Night** ("Cantique de Noël") a French carol composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847.

**"Evening Benediction"** from the opera *Hänsel und Gretel* was written by 19<sup>th</sup> Century composer Engelbert Humperdinck. He composed the opera in Frankfurt in 1891/1892. It was first performed in Weimar on December 23, 1893. The libretto was written by Humperdinck's sister Adelheid Wette. She approached him about writing music for songs that she had written for her children for Christmas based on *Hänsel und Gretel*. After several revisions, the musical sketches and the songs were turned into a full-scale opera.

It has been associated with Christmas since its earliest performances.

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## THE RAMSEY STEINWAY GRAND

Henry Englehard Steinway founded Steinway & Sons in New York City in 1853. He was an immigrant from Germany who had made 482 pianos by the time the company was founded. Working with his six sons, Mr. Steinway filed over fifty patents toward the development of the modern piano. In 1867, the company became the first of American origin to be awarded the prestigious "Grand Gold Medal of Honor" for excellence in manufacturing and engineering at the Paris Exhibition. Steinways became the piano of choice for royalty.

The Ramseys' Steinway was purchased June 4, 1872 through A.T. Stewart. The receipt from the company lists the piano as: "One new Rosewood Overstrung Concert Grand Pianoforte No. 24478. seven 1/3 Octaves with full Metallic Frame patent resonator handsome ornaments Style no. 3." Mr. Ramsey paid \$1400 for the piano and his daughter Marion was, needless-to-say, quite excited to have this piano.

### ANGELS: BIRDS, BABIES, OR BABES?

Why must angels have wings? The Greek goddess of victory, Nike, was famously winged to remind us that victory is fleeting. She brandished her whip as she drove her chariot during times of war. In the Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament, angels either look human (and are therefore unrecognized until a crucial moment) or so terrifying that they must begin their speeches, "Fear not!" Only in Isaiah's and Ezekiel's accounts are angels described as winged, and these winged seraphim and cherubim seem to fall into the terrifying category (to begin with, they might purify you with hot coals).

Because the Hebrews were chary about visual

representations of the divine, Christian angel iconography is more indebted to Greek depictions of Nike (which were in turn influenced by Egyptian depictions of the goddess Isis) than Jewish visual traditions. In its efforts to bring pagans into the fold, the early church drew on Greek and Roman imagery for the new Christian works of art. Putti (babies with wings) were first depicted on children's graves but often engaged in fighting and bacchic rites. All of these angels are quite different from the images that Victorians used as Christmas decorations.

Some of the earliest manufactured Christmas tree ornaments were wax angels cast in molds by German toy makers. Before the 1870s, Christmas trees had been primarily decorated with homemade edibles and paper ornaments. The new commercial ornaments were meant to be kept from year to year, and wax and tin ornaments quickly became cheap enough that most people could afford them. Elaborate homemade ornaments fell out of fashion.

Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, did much to popularize Christmas trees after a picture appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1848 of his Christmas tree and the royal family. This picture was reproduced in America in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1850 with a few details changed. Both pictures show the tree topped by an angel, arms and wings outstretched, holding a wreath in each hand.

The angels the Victorians frequently suspended over their trees sported crinkled gold gowns, spun glass wings, and a profusion of golden ringlets. Victorians loved children and depictions of chubby, rosy-cheeked, innocent cherubs (no bacchic rites for these kids). But best of all were the delicate, ethereal angels in prayer, representing the ideal Victorian woman. She'd never stick a hot coal on your tongue.

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